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48532

Michigan House of Representatives
Commerce Committee

Representatives:

As president of the Michigan State Chapter of NKBA, I am offering testimony today on behalf of the Executive Board of our organization – giving voice to over 600 individual members of our chapter who own, operate or work for the various businesses in Southeastern Michigan which are involved in the Kitchen & Bath Design/Build and/or Remodeling business. This message is **in support** of this legislation.

Our membership is made up of a variety of subjects who have an equally wide variety of experience in the construction arts. As I have related to our chapter members, except for a period when I served with the U.S. Navy Seabees in Vietnam in 1968 and 1969, I have worked continuously in the Construction Industry. During this time I have had many opportunities to work with and observe the individuals and associations involved with the industry – as an associate working for an architect, at a time operating my own business as a residential designer and residential building contractor and as a kitchen & bath designer and manager. During almost all of the period I have been in this business, Interior Designers have been striving for recognition and equal opportunity here in Michigan.

When our NKBA chapter sent board members to CIDR in 2002, NKBA members on that board voiced a very moderate tone towards the opposition to Interior Design recognition. We believe that this is not an issue between parties, but the awakening of universal support from a large body of individuals involved in interior design of all kinds – including Kitchen & Bath Design. All Kitchen & Bath dealers, Kitchen & Bath Equipment distributors, almost every lumber yard, companies like Home Depot, Home Depot Expo, Great Indoors, in fact, Sears, every size of “Mom & Pop” Kitchen Shops, larger companies like Michigan Kitchen Distributors in Marshall, Standard Kitchens in Grand Rapids, KSI – Kitchens & Baths of Brighton, Kurtis Kitchens, with several locations in Southeastern Michigan, E.W. Kitchens of Wixom, etc. – all have one foot on the accelerator and one on the brake because of this issue. All perform a service which everyone will agree is “interior design”. All of us have concerns about the outcome of

this legislation. This concerns not only those 600 + members of our chapter, but the office staffs of all of the companies, the truck drivers, the warehouse staffs, and the families of all of the employees of businesses in Michigan such as the ones I mention. We have been silently waiting for a resolution, but now we want to be recognized as a large, deserving, and patient group waiting for our government to do the right thing.

There is a general feeling shared by my fellow NKBA chapter members of insecurity that shadows us. We know there is a "problem" in Michigan caused by interpretations and implementation of the current Michigan construction code. What we all want is to know that no one will ever challenge our right to practice our business as we do it today; something that has happened in other states. The feeling that we can't be sure has a negative effect on every decision we make to expand and invest in new showrooms, to hire new people. And this has been the background feeling for over twenty years. Even when I was at an NKBA leadership conference in Louisville, Kentucky, recently, I was surprised at the number of people outside our state who asked questions about the pending Interior Design legislation in Michigan. I was not there ten minutes before I was asked to address the group about the state of Interior Design Legislation in Michigan. This is an issue which has been at the forefront of government relations discussions in NKBA circles for years.

As kitchen and bath designers, we work with Architects and Interior Designers. It is a common occurrence to see residential blueprints prepared by architects with a notation in the Kitchen Area stating, "See Kitchen Designer." We also help Architects by providing them with current product catalogs and specifications and we help the Interior Designers in the same manor. We do not see this issue as a competitive one between these parties. We believe the Interior Design Bill Package represents fresh opportunity in Michigan. As an NKBA Chapter, we have always expressed that we do not want to take sides. We support the clarity these bills bring to remove that shadow from our own businesses.

We believe opening of competition in this field is healthy and it promotes the best possible environment for all Michigan consumers and that the full weight and responsibility of the right to exist in the open business environment in Michigan should not be denied to Interior Designers. Fair competition inspires the greatest works of man. Competition will make all of us work harder, smarter, achieve more, and cost the consumer less. We believe that this current legislation falls on the side of fairness and equal opportunity. It is more than just a matter of licensing. It is a matter that opens up an unlimited future where Interior Designers can exercise the full extent of their individual talents to see to what heights they can reach. When we curtail the ability to pursue a career to its fullest extent, surely we also curtail the fullest and most expansive business opportunities and employment in Michigan. Let's kick the door open!

We ask that you support opportunity, business and jobs in Michigan by supporting the passage of HB4770, HB4771 and HB4772 to the House of Representatives with your full support.

William J. McKay, CKD